

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 /078 W
-----085450 020659Z /13

O R 281512Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5843

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 0328

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: EERN RW UG

SUBJECT: RWANDA/UGANDA: HABYARIMANA GOES HAT IN HAND TO SEE
AMIN

REF: 77 KIGALI 1396

LUMMARY: PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA DEPARTED FEBRUARY 28 ON
HASTILY ARRANGED TRIP TO KAMPALA, APPARENTLY TO BEG IDI
AMIN ONCE AGAIN TO KEEP OPEN RWANDA'S TRANSPORT LIFELINE
TO MOMBASA. END SUMMARY.

1. NO SOONER HAD FONMIN NSEKALIJE RETURNED FROM OAU
MEETINGS TRIPOLI THAN PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA GRABBED HIM
UP AND TOOK OFF ON HASTILY ARRANGED THREE-DAY "OFFICIAL
VISIT" TO KAMPALA, WITH AT LEAST TWO OTHER RWANDAN
CABINET MEMBERS IN TWO. PURPOSE OF VISIT AS ANNOUNCED
ON RADIO RWANDA WAS "TO FURTHER GOR GOOD NEIGHBOR
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POLICY AND SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH UGANDA."
THERE ARE CLEAR SIGNS, HOWEVER, THAT SUDDEN TRIP WAS
MADE NECESSARY BY NEW ROUND OF UGANDAN MARAUDING UPON
RWANDA'S TRANSPORTATION LINK TO INDIAN OCEAN.

2. WE HAVE SEVERAL REPORTS THAT, SOME TIME IN PAST TEN
DAYS, TRUCK-TRAILER OWNED BY WELL CONNECTED RWANDAN

BUSINESSMAN WAS HIJACKED IN UGANDA ENROUTE FROM MOMBASA WITH CARGO OF VALUABLE MERCHANDISE. THERE ARE STRONG SUSPICIONS THAT HIJACKERS WERE IN FACT UGANDAN ARMY. DRIVER AND COMPANION ARE REPORTED KILLED AND CARGO SEIZED BY UGANDAN GOVERNMENT.

3. DURING PUBLIC MEETING WITH BUSINESS SECTOR REPS LAST WEEK, HABYARIMANA WAS URGED TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT SUCH HIJACKINGS AND ARBITRARY RESTRICTIONS ON RWANDAN TRANSPORT THROUGH UGANDA (THERE ARE SAID TO BE SOME 100 TRUCKS NOW BLOCKED IN KENYA WHICH CAN NO LONGER MAKE KIGALI/BUJUMBURA RUNS DUE TO WEIGHT LIMITS IMPOSED BY UGANDA LAST OCTOBER). BUSINESSMEN TOLD HABYARIMANA THAT HIGH-RISK, LOW-RETURN TRUCK TRANSPORT ACROSS UGANDA IS PRIMARY REASON FOR RECENT DRAMATIC BOOST IN PRICES OF IMPORTED MERCHANDISE IN LOCAL MARKET. BUT, GOR DEL SUBSEQUENTLY DISPATCHED TO KAMPALA REPORTEDLY FAILED TO OBTAIN ANY SATISFACTION WHATEVER FROM UGANDANS.

4. PRESIDENCY SEC GEN BUREGEYA, WHILE OFFERING NO DETAILS ON CURRENT TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES WITH UGANDA, CONFIRMED TO ME THAT PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO KAMPALA IN FACT WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM. BUREGEYA OBSERVED THAT UGANDA'S CONTROL OVER 85 PERCENT OF RWANDAN EXPORT-IMPORT TRAFFIC MADE "GOOD NEIGHBOR" RELATIONS WITH AMIN A PRACTICAL IMPERATIVE FOR GOR, ONE CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH COULD ONLY BE RELIEVED OVER LONG TERM WITH CREATION OF ALTERNATIVE ROUTES. BUREGEYA STRESSED TO ME THAT VISIT HAD NO IDEOLOGICAL OR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS WHATEVER FOR RWANDA, BUT RATHER WAS AN ATTEMPT TO PLACATE AMIN AND THEREBY SECURE VITAL UGANDAN COOPERATION.

5. COMMENT: HABYARIMANA MADE SIMILAR TRIP TO KAMPALA JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, ONCE AGAIN AFTER RWANDAN DEL HAD FAILED TO PERSUADE AMIN TO REOPEN TRANSPORT PIPELINE. WE ARE IMPRESSED THAT HABYARIMANA IS NOT ABOVE GOING HAT IN HAND PERSONALLY TO AMIN WHEN LATTER'S COOPERATION BECOMES LIFE AND EATH MATTER FOR RWANDAN ECONOMY, ALTHOUGH IT MUST GALL HIM DEEPLY TO HAVE TO DO SO. WE WONDER NEVERTHELESS WHETHER AMIN WILL BE SATISFIED WITH PERSONAL ABASEMENT BY RWANDAN PRESIDENT, OR WILL IN FACT REQUIRE MORE SUBSTANTIAL --MAYBE POLITICAL-- QUID PRO QUO FOR HIS COOPERATION. LITTLE WONDER THAT GOR UNABLE TO TAKE PUBLIC POSTURE CONDEMNING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN UGANDA. AS BUREGEYA SAID, AMIN'S STRANGLEHOLD ON RWANDA IS A FACT OF LIFE WITH WHICH ANY RWANDAN GOVERNMENT MUST LIVE UNTIL ALTERNATIVES MATERIALIZE.

6. WORTH ADDING THAT SITUATION UNDERSCORES USEFULNESS
OF OUR CONSIDERING WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPING
TRANSPORT ALTERNATIVES FOR RWANDA AND BURUNDI, SUCH
AS RUSUMO-ISAKA ROAD LINK THROUGH TANZANIA WHICH IS
NOT YET FULLY FINANCED (REFTEL).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, ACCESS TO PORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KIGALI00328
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780095-0294
Format: TEL
From: KIGALI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978024/aaaaadhc.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d5dfa2d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 KIGALI 1396
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3557486
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RWANDA/UGANDA: HABYARIMANA GOES HAT IN HAND TO SEE AMIN
TAGS: ETRN, OVIP, RW, UG, (HABYARIMANA, JUVENAL), (AMIN DADA, IDI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d5dfa2d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014